

# APPLICATION SCREENING AND ELIGIBILITY TOOL

## Montana NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) FY22

Complete this tool for each CSP application. File the completed worksheet with the application and subsequent contract if selected for funding. 'Low' priority applications will not be ranked in the Conservation Assessment and Ranking Tool (CART) unless directed by state Programs managers.

Also refer to 440-CPM-530.20 E., *Ineligible Applicants*. Where the applicant or the land does not meet general or program-specific eligibility requirements and ineligibility is required by program policy, NRCS must immediately notify the applicant of this adverse decision using exhibit 530.141B, *Ineligibility Determination for Conservation Program Contract Letter*, and include exhibit 530.143M, *Appeal Rights*. If NRCS otherwise determines that the application will not be assessed, follow the provided guidance and notify the applicant of the action using 440-CPM-530 subpart O, exhibit 530.141A *Application Deferral Letter Template* after the funding obligation period is complete.

Section 1 - Application Information	
Applicant Name:	County:
Application Number:	Field Office:
Evaluator Name:	Date:
Section 2 - Screening. To be completed at time of application	
<p>1. Has the applicant had a contract in ANY NRCS program terminated for reasons within their control in the last three years (since January 1, 2019)? If yes, identify the following:</p> <p>Date of Termination:</p> <p>Ref: 440-CPM-530.32 (iii)</p>	<p><b>YES – Mark application as 'Low' priority in ProTracts and do not assess until all 'High' priority applications are assessed.</b></p> <p><b>NO – Continue to next question.</b></p>
<p>2. Does the applicant have an existing contract in ANY NRCS program that has been determined to be in noncompliance for reasons within their control, and is currently under an active NRCS-CPA-153? If yes, identify the following:</p> <p>Contract #:</p> <p>Signed date:                      Action due:</p> <p>Ref: 440-CPM-530.32 (ii)</p>	<p><b>YES – Mark application as 'Low' priority in ProTracts and do not assess until all 'High' priority applications are assessed.</b></p> <p><b>NO – Continue to next question.</b></p>
<p>3. Is NRCS aware that the applicant has failed to properly operate and maintain conservation practices or activities that were installed with program financial assistance AND are still within their lifespan, even if the contract is expired?</p> <p>Ref: 440-CPM-530.32 (i); 530.31 D.(3)</p>	<p><b>YES – Mark application as 'Low' priority in ProTracts and do not assess until all 'High' priority applications are assessed.</b></p> <p><b>NO – Continue to next question.</b></p>

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<p>4. Did the applicant fail to renew a prior CSP contract within the last 2 years, regardless of the reason for not entering into a renewal contract? If yes, identify the following:</p> <p>Contract number:                      Date of expiration:</p> <p><b>Exception:</b> Applicant may combine two CSP contracts obligated in different years.</p> <p>Ref: 7CFR 1470.26(c); 440-CPM-530.302 C.(4); 440-CPM-530.320 H.; and NB 300-21-4 LTP Attachment B</p>	<p><b>YES – Application will not be assessed, and applicant is INELIGIBLE for 2 years following expiration of that prior existing contract <u>unless the exception can be applied.</u></b></p> <p><b>NO – ‘High’ priority. Complete assessment in CART and rank it if stewardship threshold eligibility is met and <i>Section 3</i> does not indicate otherwise.</b></p>
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**Section 3 – Program Requirements** identifies applicant and land eligibility requirements that must be met at the time of application, no later than the batching period deadline. **When required information is missing or needs action from the applicant, they must be immediately notified and given the opportunity to correct the issue.**

<b>Section 3 – CSP Program Requirements. Verify at time of application and prior to</b>	
<p>Applicant must establish records with FSA prior to the sign-up deadline.</p> <p>Is/does the applicant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Operator, owner, or other tenant of an agricultural operation in the Farm Service Agency (FSA) farm records management system?</li> <li>b) Share in the risk of producing a crop; share in the crop available for marketing from the farm (or would have shared had the crop been produced); and participate in the daily management, administration, and performance of the operation for the land included in the contract?</li> </ul> <p>Ref: 440-CPM 530.302 C.</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p><b>NO - Application is INELIGIBLE for the current sign-up and may reapply in a future sign-up.</b></p>
<p>Applicant must identify eligible land and land uses at the time of application.</p> <p>Did the applicant provide a map by the sign-up deadline that identifies and delineates the boundaries of all eligible land uses and acres included in the operation?</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Document the applicant was notified of requirement and given a reasonable opportunity to provide required information.</p> <p>Ref: 440-CPM 530.22 A.; 530.31 A.; 530.41 A.(1); 530.302 D.(3); 530.304 B.</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p><b>NO – Application is incomplete and will not be assessed.</b></p>

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<p>Land eligibility is based on the land use, condition, and management of an applicant's agricultural operation, and must meet BOTH of the following criteria.</p> <p>Is the land:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Under the effective control of the applicant? Effective control means possession of the land by ownership, written lease, or other legal agreement and authority to act as decision maker for the day-to-day management of the operation both at the time the applicant enters into a conservation contract and for the duration of the contract.</li> <li>b) Operated by the applicant with equipment, labor, management, and production or cultivation practices that are substantially separate from other operations?</li> </ul> <p>Ref: 440-CPM 530.302 D; 530-320G; MT Memorandum on Control of Land and Public Land Eligibility.</p>	<p><b>YES - Only land that meets criteria a) AND b) may be included in an application.</b></p> <p><b>NO – Application does not meet land eligibility and will not be assessed.</b></p>
<p>Newly acquired or newly eligible land, even if covered by the definition of eligible land, must have an established or documented management system.</p> <p>Does the land in agricultural operation have a demonstrated or documented management system of “at least one growing season”?</p> <p>NOTE: Newly acquired or newly eligible land <u>may</u> be considered to have a documented management system IF it will be managed the same as similar eligible land already in the applicant's operation (i.e., <u>same</u> pest management, nutrient management, soil tillage intensity rating (STIR), crop rotation, grazing management system, etc.)</p> <p>Ref: 440-CPM 530.302 D (4).</p>	<p><b>YES - Only land that has an established or documented management system may be included in an application.</b></p> <p><b>NO – Newly acquired or newly eligible land may be considered in a subsequent sign-up.</b></p>

<b>General Program Requirements. Must be provided prior to obligation if preapproved for funding</b>	
<p>Current direct-deposit information, including the bank routing number and account number for electronic deposit of conservation payments for each participant with a designated payment percentage. (Form SF-1199A, <i>Direct Deposit Sign-up Form</i>)</p> <p>Ref: 440-CPM 530.41 A. (2)</p>	
<p>Written landowner concurrence if this application includes structural or vegetative conservation practices or activities on land the applicant does not own. Use Form NRCS-CPA-1257, <i>Landowner Concurrence Form to Install Structural or Vegetative Conservation Activities</i>, or other written landowner concurrence.</p> <p>Ref: 440-CPM 530.22 D. (3); 530.144D</p>	

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Applications with FSA Subsidiary Records eligibility issues that NRCS believes will be corrected may be preapproved for funding, and the applicant has until time of obligation to meet this eligibility. Refer to 440-CPM-530.142A *Checklist to Address NRCS Customer Eligibility Issues* and 530.142E *Conservation Program Application Checklist* if any of the following eligibility conditions exist.

<b>Section 4 – FSA Subsidiary Records Eligibility. Must be completed prior to obligation if preapproved for funding</b>	
<p>Farm Operating Plan - the latest farm operating plan recorded in the current year in the FSA business file system must have a status of "Filed" or "Determined" and the associated form CCC-902 must be recorded in this database for each fiscal year.</p> <p>Ref: 440-CPM 530.22 B; NB 300-21-7a; FSA Notice PL-293</p>	
<p>Adjusted gross income (AGI) certification is completed and submitted with FSA, and eligibility = "Y"</p> <p>Note: For contract participants that are entities, new entity members succeeding to the contract are required to file appropriate AGI certification forms for the entity to maintain 100-percent AGI eligibility for payments.</p> <p>Ref: 440-CPM 530.22 B</p>	
<p>Form AD-1026, "Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification," is filed, certified, and eligibility = "Y"</p> <p>Ref: 440-CPM 530.22 C</p>	
<p>Farm Tract Eligibility (FTE) - determine if participant is "In Compliance" and FTE eligibility = "Y":</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC)</li> <li>(ii) Planted Converted Wetland- PCW (If applicable)</li> <li>(iii) Converted Wetland – CW (If applicable)</li> </ul> <p>Ref: 440-CPM 530.22 C</p>	
<p>Program payment limitations - program legislation (Farm Bills) establish payment limitations by program and participant type.</p> <p>Ref: 440-CPM 530.306 (6); 530.143C</p>	